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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5411
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RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 002509

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, NEA/PI, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA,
B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
LONDON FOR TSOU
PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - ELECTIONS

TODAY'S TOPICS:

- BRIBES AND GIFTS
- A MESSAGE TO VOTERS
- YOUTH DEMANDS
- HOW TO CHOOSE
- DEFENDING THE GOVERNMENT
- MONITORING WOMEN'S ACTION

Block Quotes

Sunday, June 25, 2006

¶1. An op-ed headlined "And a Purse Too," by Ahmed Mohammed Al-Fahd in the conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan stated, "If we were to calculate roughly the cost of gifts allegedly given to prospective women voters, we would deduce that buying purses for women is cheaper and better than paying money for their votes. A brand name purse sells wholesale for KD 500 (approximately US \$1455). This is a justifiable practice because, first, it would be considered a gift, which is not different than the pens, notebooks, and umbrellas that we used to give away in previous elections. Second, the law does not yet specify that gift-giving is against the law. Third, women would not feel humiliated to receive these gifts, as would be the case for those who accept money for their votes. When these women attend diwanis at night they would carry these brand name purses with pride. In any case, whether or not the prosecutor charged the gift-giver with bribery, and whether or not those who raffled apartments in Lebanon are charged with dishonest conduct, the fact remains that women in Kuwait need election education and someone needs to draw their attention to the danger around them. Most importantly, women must not sell their votes whether the purse is a genuine brand name or a knock-off."

¶2. Pro-government Arabic daily Al-Seyassah published the second part of an article by Kuwaiti writer Mr. Zubn Al-Bathal headlined "A Letter to Voters II." The second letter by Mr. Al-Zubn advised women, "Out of concern for the integrity and honesty of the election process and for the candidates, we must not spread rumors that we hear about other people. Unless we were eye witnesses to the fact, then we must not help spread these corruptive rumors.... Rumors are a dangerous social disease that have spread rapidly in our community. That is why we must fight back by voting for good people for the National Assembly."

¶3. Ms. Shaykha Al-Mutairi summarized the demands of young men and women in a column in conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan titled, "Inner Strife." Ms. Al-Mutairi concluded, "Young people are looking

for those who would work for their country with honesty, dignity, and self-discipline. We seek torches to light our paths. Liars, deceivers, and those who sold their honor should withdraw from the race. We need people who can point their fingers at what is wrong, and do something about it. We want representatives that are sympathetic to their constituents' needs. We are in dire need of those who can preserve our country and protect our future and the future of our children. We are experiencing a democratic wedding, so let us not ruin it. My comments only apply to some people, and not all."

¶4. In his column headlined, "Even If He Were to Lead a Dissolute Life" Dr. Sajed Al-Abdaly, Chair of the National Committee for Honest Election, continued his advice on how to make the right choice on Election Day. Dr. Abdaly opined in the independent Arabic daily Al-Rai Al-Aam, "We do not need weak people in the National Assembly, even if they are righteous people. We want strong candidates, people who have foresight and sharp vision. We are seeking people who can fight battles against political backwardness and financial corruption. We should vote for strong people who would represent the nation, even if they were to lead a dissolute life. Their arrogance will backfire on them."

¶5. Under the headline "Not in Defense of the Government," by political activist and Kuwait University political science professor Dr. Shamlan Yousef Al-Issa defended the government's position, "We must say it aloud and frankly that it is not just in order to blame all MPs for repeated violations, or for embezzlement of public funds when discussing issues of national interest at the National Assembly.... We have been infected with some corrupt MPs who have used and abused our democratic system for personal gain. This was possible because we lack a clear reform vision and do not act on the principles of a contemporary state based on legislation and constitutional laws. Instead we have adopted a practice of appeasing individuals at the expense of the country's national interest."

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¶6. Progressive Arabic daily Al-Qabas published on the last page by Dr. Naji Saud Al-Zaid's comment, "Everybody within and outside of Kuwait is watching the election. That is why we wish for women's voting to be honest, independent, and unbiased. We expect women to cast their votes with the national interest of Kuwait in mind. This is a historic chance for women to have their say count. We definitely do not want women to vote based on family, sect, tribe, or ethnic loyalties. We have suffered enough from what men have brought upon us during decades past when they dragged us with them down that path. We want an honest and free vote. We want women's votes to bring us honorable MPs. We want the right people for the future of our children."

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